

Montana Back Roads 4x4 Club Meeting Minutes  
October 13, 2008  
Montana Club, North Reserve, Missoula, MT

Members present: Derek Emerson, Jason Vaughn, Willie and Jeanne Worthy, Mike and Marcella Lenz, Curtis and Justin Evelo, Jim Younkin, Rae McKay, Larry Garrison, Joe Lorenzo, Max Hillberry, Bruce Erickson, and Rachel Maxwell.

This Monday was the only open room option at the Montana Club for all month.

**Organization:** The club should join some type of organization, will someone look into it? Curtis volunteered to do some checking

**T-shirts** were brought for those who ordered them. Club made the initial purchase of 29 shirts, at cost of \$188, which will be the same amount collected. You can order anything else directly from Figma. Willie has a catalog with colors and styles.

**Willie read the Financial statement for 2008.**

**Phillipsburg Area:**

Club had received letter from Phillipsburg District Ranger, Charlene Bucha Gentry, which club members received a copy of via email. Willie commented that it seems as if he's the only one who wants to take the time to work with them to develop a challenge trail, as he had no response to the email requesting some help. He had looked at maps and came up with a couple of trails and had planned to go to Missoula library for more research today, but due to Columbus Day, the library was closed.

**No summer club party**, Willie didn't feel like hosting one, and no one else volunteered.

**Missoula Food Bank** has asked if we can help with Thanksgiving turkey distribution, Monday, November 24, Tuesday, November 25, and Wednesday November 26, at McCormick Park in Missoula. Need trucks to transport the turkeys to the park. More info on this will follow in emails.

**Elections:** We need a new President and Vice President, possibly do an email vote around the first of December. First we need to amend bylaws to include a Vice President. Bruce stated we need a new officer: someone to write and edit a newsletter. No one volunteered.

**Lack of trips this summer**....anyone can lead a trip. Thanks, Derek for the club trip to Blue Mountain area this fall, other participants were Steve Schardt, Rae, Max, Larry, Joe, and Bruce. They had great weather and a scenic picnic area for

lunch. Possible snow trip in February or so?? Bruce has new area in Superior for us to explore next spring/summer, with lots of mining and logging history.

**Club sponsors:** Joe said he would look into getting club sponsors as he enjoys fund raising. First we need to decide what we'd do with the money (RCORUA charges business sponsors \$100), and have a project in mind. We should also ask possible sponsors (maybe Drivelines of Missoula or Sportsman's Warehouse) to do a "ride-a-long" on one of our trips. However, it will be June or July next summer before we can get back into some of the areas. In the meantime, we need to challenge the FS on the roads that are closed.

**GPS Garnet area:** Mike will GPS the Garnet area, which is BLM, this winter on his sled. Biggest problem is that whole area is checker boarded with private land (a patented mining claim is privately owned land). BLM has a rule if there are over a certain number of vehicles, you have to register with them first (maybe 10). Brian Mairano, BLM Outdoor Recreational Planner, who spoke to club in the past said don't worry about it.

Guest speaker: Mike Jeffords, Ravalli County Off Road User Association (RCORUA).

**Highlights of his talk: be sure to ALWAYS carry your map. Something important he brought up is to look at old fire and logging sales areas to see when trails/roads were developed. Be sure to always turn a problem trail user in to FWP, FS, Montana TIPS, and your own organization.**

They put in **1041 volunteer hours in 2008, with 30 members mostly.** They have 450 members total, with a mailing list of 250-275.

They have 29 business sponsors, had a sponsorship drive by a really good, hard working fundraising person. He stressed it was necessary to recognize your sponsors, publically acknowledge them, plus they do a fun ride inviting them over a weekend once a year, involving other such groups as Blue Ribbon Coalition, Treasure State Alliance and the Bitterroot Ridgerunners.

Have been working well with Forest Service in the Bitterroot NF, they have a real dedicated 12 person group, the FS now understands about problem quad users, and realizes that their group turns them in, so FS now respects them. Do use the Montana TIPS program where you can stay anonymous if you wish.

Get to know the rangers on your district. Be aware that district rangers move around a lot, so if you find one who is willing to work with you, take advantage of that. FS calls them when they have questions or problems, and this summer even had the fire crews report on trails to add to travel plan. They have worked very hard to reach this point.

For problem users, education first, then turn them in, police our own. Also going to be involved with FS education program to reach kids to be responsible riders, how to respect forest and other users. In February four of their members will meet with snowmobile club, then in March will spend five days in classroom. (between the four of them, they've put in 200 hours volunteer time!). Mike mentioned that in 2007 he rode only 47 miles, in 2008 he rode 600 miles, though most of it was spent with the FS OHV ranger GPSing trails.

He stressed how important it is to get your OHV ranger out looking at the trails you're interested in as well as GPSing them for future reference. This can work along with sponsor enthusiasm as well. The ATV manufacturers are supportive on the racing end, but not so much in recreation (which is where most of the sales are). Polaris has a grant fund of \$250,000,000 (maybe I heard this wrong!! Sounds like an awful lot!), with \$25,000 awarded in one grant for trails and education. Yamaha does \$30,000 grants, while FWP has grants up to \$30,000.

Definitely need to set aside differences in groups and work together, and that means bicycles, hikers, horses, quads, 4x4 vehicles, motorcycles and even water craft! It's an ACCESS issue. The environmentalists say that there's TOO much access right now, but challenge them on how they get to their favorite trail. Mike said we should spend a weekend with both clubs together, and gave his personal pledge to help our club as much as possible.

His club has a spring conference scheduled on trails, in which we should consider participating. He'd like to get together with a couple of members from all the different groups. Need to keep in touch with them. They do not have a web site yet, but it should be done by next spring.

Challenge trails: person who buys a 4x4 vehicle or quad and then sees TV or magazine ad, but there is no challenge on just FS dirt roads, so he goes out and causes environmental damage in order to challenge his rig and himself. Biggest challenge is to educate young people on respectful riding and use of forest.

Be careful of media: Mark Holyoake of Channel 13 news did a film interview with their club, shot 4 or 5 hours of footage, which ran about 5 minutes total on TV and was not very positive on their club.

FS wants to have all designated camp sites, and would eliminate the 300 foot to rule for camping.

Judge Lynch in recent ruling in the Gallatin National Forest stated: when government set up WSA (Wilderness Study Areas), they had 9 years to act (It's been 30!). They haven't taken any off; law said it had to be so many acres (I think 5000 acres to become one), but there are many smaller ones. They had to have things in common, such as wilderness area adjacent, no trails (not even

hiking trails! while some even have roads!). We need to hold our government representatives accountable.

Know your figures! In a recent ruling Judge Lynch took away 100 of the 160 miles of single track trails in the Gallatin National Forest. He did say that because of technology and growth of population in area that WSAs should have more motorized use, and that an area can't be totally closed.

The Bitterroot National Forest draft will be out in March, environmentalists are suing over Sapphire Crest trails, RCORUA only has \$5000 in legal funds to fight this. Forest Service stated that although old fire and logging roads aren't "really roads", they haven't closed them, and they have maintained them!

He had some interesting figures: in Montana in 2003 there were 23,000 registered ATVs, in 2007 there were 47,000, and by 2016 it is expected to be over 100,000 (and this does not include the "utes", motorcycles, or 4x4s, it is only ATVs). In FS Region 1 (which Montana is part of) there are 25,000 miles of trails, of these 1000 miles are off road trails and of this 1000 miles 900 are for motorcycles. In the Bitterroot Forest there are 2500 miles of road, but most are just dusty logging roads, while we need destination and scenic areas. He mentioned that FS may open up some trails to the "utes", but will not make any new trails for them.

After Mike left, Larry asked if we could send him some money for his gas, since he came to Missoula all the way from Hamilton. Consensus was that we would do so.